

7-Budget Committee Minutes 01/18/2007

Hopkinton Budget Committee

Final Minutes

January 18, 2007

Present: Karen Irwin, Chair, Patrice Gerseny, Barbara Unger, Danny Coen, David Lancaster, Bob Carpenter - Contoocook Village Precinct Representative, Tom O'Donnell - Hopkinton Village Precinct Representative, Marshall Rowe - School Board Representative.

Absent: Jane Bradstreet, Peter Russell - Selectmen Representative.

Chair Irwin began the meeting at 6:35 pm. She handed out supplements to the Library Budget concerning descriptions of the revenues and the proposed materials budget.

Chair Irwin passed out spreadsheets for the committee to review for Proposed Budgets. These were created to help simplify the budget and have a consistent format. Chair Irwin accepted input from the member as to the format and content. Adjustments were made. BC member Unger requested the spreadsheet be separated into subsections. BC member Rowe offered the format found on page 19 in the school handout which was a summary page with a grand total the amounts in graph format. This format was accepted and will follow the Budget Analysis spreadsheet. And last will be warrants in the handouts.

Before the public hearing Chair Irwin will forward the final draft to the town, precincts, library, and school board for them to complete as their handout at the public hearing on the 24th.

BC member Lancaster observed that the budgets presented to the board were not at the target of 3.8% asked for by the Budget Committee. He requested that Chair Irwin ask the budget presenters to include an additional budget showing only a 3.8% increase. This budget is to show where the departments would make the cuts.

BC member Carpenter noted the town has a blending of budgets. He said he would like to see what the cost is to continue the services at their current level. The additional state mandated programs, costing 600K, put the school budget over the 3.8% target. Therefore they would have to level fund in order to stay within the target. This is not practical if the school board's goal is to maintain the current level/quality of services.

BC member Lancaster requested a separate page of budget items for the Slusser Center.

BC member Coen requested the department heads be present to answer questions at the public hearing on the 24th.

BC member Unger feels the board should look more closely at revenues next year. BC member Rowe questioned why presenters felt the revenues were less important than the expenditures and why the town argued that their revenue numbers were conservative. BC member Carpenter offered that no one can control revenues only expenditures. If we control costs and revenues go up, the Town benefits by reducing the burden on the taxpayers or by funding worthwhile programs that were cut.

BC member Lancaster is concerned with paying down the long term debt as proposed. BC member Coen would like to see the proposal to pay down the debt go before the voters annually. He observed the tax payers know where any school surplus dollars; it goes to reduce the school tax rate.

Chair Irwin stated that she would like to review operational policies at the public meeting for things like staffing for the school and the town. Chair Irwin would like the presenters to briefly discuss their policies. BC member Rowe stated that all school staff positions are in the budget, an exception being a change in a special needs child's circumstance may require additional. The school has a reserve account. Business Administrator Clark noted they would like to see the fund increased to a level that would cover any sudden out of district placement.

The format of the Public Hearing was then discussed. It was decided that the precincts and the library each would get 10 – 15 minutes for their presentations. Then the floor would be open for public questions for the precincts and the library. This would be followed by the School and town presentations, each to be 20 – 30 minutes. The floor would then be open around 1 ½ hours for public/taxpayer questions. Each individual is limited to one question and a follow-up question if necessary. If the individual has an additional question, they must go to the end of the line and wait their turn.

BC member Coen wondered if the Cemetery Trustees were like the Library Trustees. The town controls the budget do they have the authority if cemetery trustees were set up similar to library?

Other Issues and Concerns

BC member Carpenter questioned if the Budget Committee agrees with the process the Selectmen used to put together the town portion of the budget. Chair Irwin will put it in the agenda for discussion January 31st.

BC member O'Donnell noted that there is a serious discussion around town concerning raises of 3% and the 9% and 10% raises. BC member Lancaster noted that they seemed to be merit based. BC member Gerseny doesn't feel it is the committee's responsibility to be the keepers of personnel.

BC member Coen read from the Local Government Center book regarding the responsibility of Town Budget Committees. He would like the committee to consider making recommendations on allowable percentages for raises earlier in the process next year.

BC member Lancaster would like the committee to consider scheduling quarterly meetings to review progress of the town and school budgets that were presented to the committee. He felt the committee would have a better understanding of how spending was occurring during the year, so they could make more informed decisions regarding the '08 - '09 budget make informed recommendations to them concerning the ;'08 – '09 budgets.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 pm.

Respectfully Submitted.

Beth Clark
Secretary